

SECURITY EMBOSSING OF POSTAGE STAMPS

by John Evans

Overprinting, underprinting and perfins are all well-known methods used by firms to protect their stock of postage stamps. However, a lesser known security measure is embossing which was perhaps the first form of security endorsement ever to be used on postage stamps.

A number of embossed examples of postage stamps exist from the early half of the Queen Victoria era. As a process in itself, embossing was widely used, for example in tying fiscal stamps to documents and the personalisation of postal stationery. It appears that several firms extended the application to including their supplies of postage stamps.

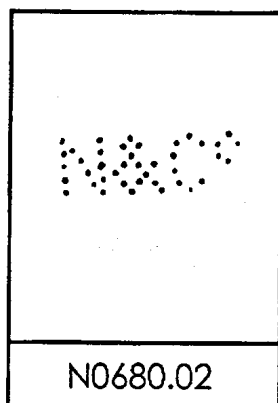
So far, dated copies have been noted from 22 June 1847 through to 16 August 1875, spanning the introduction of the mainstream security endorsement measures. It is almost certain that later dates are yet to be found. According to McGowan ("The British Philatelist", November 1931) in December 1878 a Mr J. R. Mortimer enquired of the Post Office if he could impress his name and address on stamps by means of a relief-die and he was informed that there was no objection but that his plan was not so effective as perforation.

The earliest example I have seen is probably a 1d red imperf said to be from plate 34, which would date it circa June 1843. It has a "grill" type of embossing has clearly affected the Maltese cross cancellation thus proving that the embossing was applied prior to use.

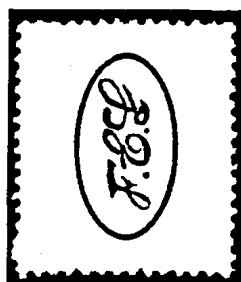


The earliest dated copy is a 1d imperf, said to be plate 72, on cover posted in Leith and addressed to Wick with the cover backstamped Leith JUN 22 1847. The stamp is embossed with a design enclosing the letters J.B & Co. The same design was impressed into the wax seal used to seal the letter.

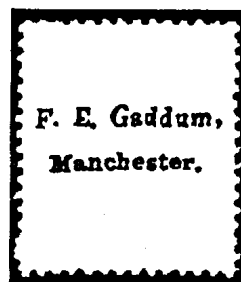
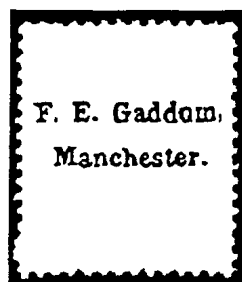
The letter is signed something like "John Balfo(...) & Co" but as always seems the case with early letters, the handwriting is awful!



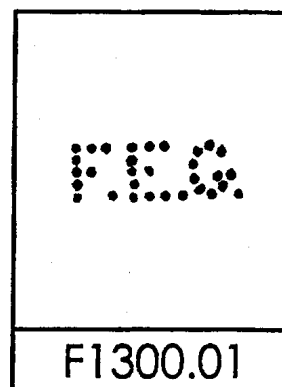
Another firm that employed embossing was Novelli & Co who had offices in both Manchester and London. Some half a dozen examples have come to light, the plates used seeming to suggest that the company may have used embossing for several years. I have since acquired a cover bearing the perfin die N0680.02 on cover dated 9 AUG 77 and posted in London. On the envelope flap is an embossing almost identical to that found on the stamps but with the place name 'MANCHESTER' replaced by 'LONDON E.C. The perfin die is recorded as having been in use from 1871.



Embossing



Examples of Underprint



Another firm used embossing simultaneously with underprinting. The illustrated 'FEG within oval' is taken from a photocopy of an advertisement describing the stamp as *"F.F.GODDEN(?) MANCHESTER unofficial underprint with embossed initial. 1864 1d plate 161... embossed F.E.G. ... and on reverse this previously unrecorded underprint which is unfortunately covered by paper ..."*. Two similar underprints have been noted. The first reads "F.E.Gaddum", originally illustrated in the "GB Journal Vol 4 1963" which goes on to mention examples from plates 159 and 161 (plates put to press 17.8.72 and 17.9.72 respectively). The second underprint reads "F.E.Gaddum" which has recently appeared in the latest Stanley Gibbons Queen Victoria Specialised catalogue volume 11 which records only plate 161. Perfin die F1300.01 has been provisionally identified as belonging to the firm F.E Gaddum, Manchester with

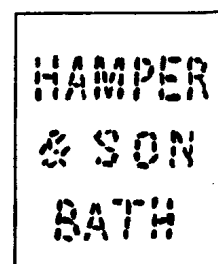
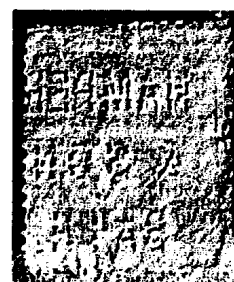
examples known from the early 1870's. Note that the illustration for the embossing was taken from a photocopy of a stamp with cancellation and should be treated as being my best guess!

Since both Novelli and F.E.Gaddum were located in Manchester and using embossing at about the same time, I wonder if perhaps they shared the same supplier of stationery who also supplied jtheir stocks of stamps.

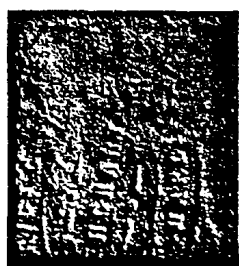
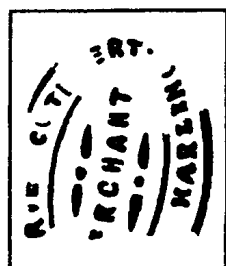


The latest dated copy I have seen is for S. Bretton, an upholsterer in Eastbourne. The impression is on a 1d red, plate number indecipherable, and cancelled "Eastbourne AU 16 75". It is attached to a small piece on the reverse of which are the words "...ephen Bretton...aker & Upholsterer...us Road".

Many examples of embossing take the form of text contained within an oval, possibly made from dies that were originally intended for other purposes such as embossing stationery. However at least one firm appears to have used a die produced specifically for marking stamps, consisting of a fairly crude series of cuts.



I know of several further copies of partially embossed 1d reds whose user can not be readily identified. However two may have just enough for the user to be identified. The first of these almost certainly involves the name "Cuthbert". Given the positioning of the place name, "Harlin(g)", I would



guess that it is preceded with perhaps "East", "West", or such like. The stamp, a 1d red "star" perf 14, is cancelled with a 57? numeral. There is an East Harling just off the road from Thetford to Norwich, Norwich using the "575" numeral.



The second example was illustrated in latest "GB Journal" and reads "Thomas Hans.../Ship(broker?)/North Shi(elds?)" and is on a 1d red star which presumably dates it prior to 1864, plate unknown.

The oddest example I have is on a 1d red star, which has a very fine embossing that is clearly part of a very much larger die. The design appears similar to that shown opposite. In a way it is unfortunate that it is lightly cancelled (831 numeral) and not on piece, hence I can not be certain mat the embossing was applied prior to use and not through some accident of subsequent storage.

<i>nd of 281 lb.....</i>
<i>8 bushels.....</i>
<i>to the bushel.....</i>
<i>.....</i>
<i>.....</i>

A summary of those examples with clear embossing that have come to light have been listed below. I have not seen an actual illustration for those in italic so their exact embossing design is unknown.

	Stamp	Plate put to press	Cancel Date
Alexander White Glasgow	<i>1d Plate 120</i>	8.9.68	-
FEG	<i>1d Plate 159</i> <i>1d Plate 161</i>	17.8.72 17.9.72	-
HAMPER & SONS BATH	<i>1d Plate 146</i>	23.1.71	-
J.B.&C ⁰	<i>1d star (Plate 72?)</i>	21.10.46?	22.6.47
J.C.S.&Co., Lon., S.E.	<i>1d Plate 181</i>	26.5.75	-
Macfies & Sons	<i>1d star (pl?) Large Crown Perfl4</i>	1855 to 1864	-
NOVELLI & C ^o MANCHESTER	<i>1d Plate 119 (JF)</i> <i>1d Plate 130 (HC)</i> <i>1d Plate 153 Pair (GB/GC)</i> <i>1d Plate 153</i> <i>1d Plate 159</i> <i>3d Rose Pl. 6</i> <i>3d Rose Pl. 10(CF)SG102</i> <i>6d Mauve Pl.9 (JP) SGI09</i> <i>6d Chestnut Pl. 11 (EH) SG122</i>	15.8.68 5.6.69 27.12.71 27.12.71 4.5.72 22.6.69 1.1.73 3.5.70 25.1.72	- Nov72 Jan 73 - - - - - -
S. BRETTON (etc)	<i>1d plate?(GB)</i>	-	16.8.75
Williams, Draper, Redruth	<i>1d Plate 71</i>	1.3.64	-

Examples of embossing can also be found on the stamps of other countries, the following having been reported: -

Mauritius	1902	"D, Frase" (note comma not full stop).
Switzerland	?	Swiss cross used as a 'Watermark'
Sweden	1970	"KR"

And finally some questions.

- 1) Has anyone an envelope for Novelli and Co with the flap embossed with the Manchester design found on the stamps?
- 2) Has anyone a cover for F E Gaddum with the envelope flap embossed?
- 3) Can any budding detective suggest a possible identity for "Cuthbert of Harling" or "Thomas Hans.." ?
- 4) I would appreciate any company details for the firms mentioned.

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Mike Walsh, Dave Hill, Rosemary Smith, Maurice Harp, Harvey Tilles and Mike Jackson.

References : 1) McGowan, The British Philatelist, 1931
 2) RM & RW Willcocks, GB Journal Vol 4, 1963
 3) The GB Journal Vol. 36 (May/June 1998)
 4) Stanley Gibbons GB Vol 1 Specialised, 11th
 edition

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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Rosemary Smith.

At the time of writing this, July 21st, Roy has been unable to fill 4 pages for the New Identities slot. If you have new identified covers, do send details to Roy. I know we have to slow down sometime with new identities. I haven't been to a Stamp Fair for months so I too am flagging. I shall be sending the Bulletin to the printer in 3 days and Roy may yet send the centre pages.

Very few comments about previous articles or queries from members have come in during the last two-three months. So it has enabled me to publish these longer articles. I trust there is something of interest for everyone.